

## CLAIMS

- 1 1. A network comprising a plurality of switching nodes interconnected by communication links, the  
2 switching nodes transferring digital data packets thereamong over said communication links,
- 3 A. at least one switching node in the network pre-establishing a bypass virtual circuit through  
4 the network through at least one other switching node in the network and over respective  
5 ones of said communication links to define a path through said network that bypasses at least  
6 one of said communication links connected to said at least one switching node and another  
7 switching node which is also connected to said at least one of said communication links,
- 8 B. the at least one switching node transferring ones of said digital packets, which it would  
9 otherwise transfer to the another switching node, over the bypass virtual circuit in the event  
10 of a malfunction of the respective at least one of said communication links and said another  
11 switching node.

860720" F54E750

add  
a2  
add  
a3